This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

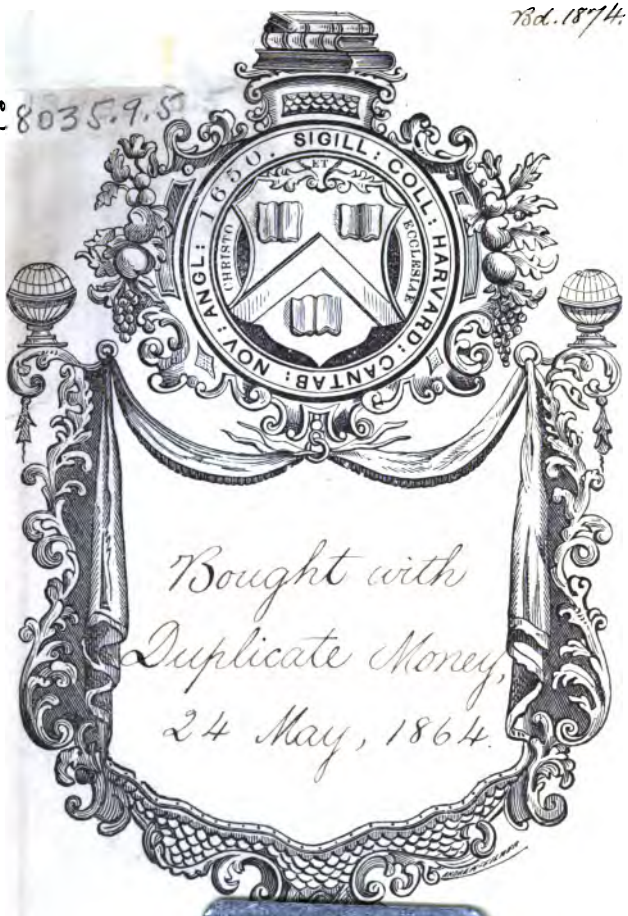
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

C
8035
9
5

C8035.9.5

Bd. 1874.

C8035.9.5



Bought with
Duplicate Money,
24 May, 1864.

HISTORY

OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCHES

COMPOSING THE

STURBRIDGE ASSOCIATION,

FROM

THEIR ORIGIN TO 1843.

PREPARED BY A COMMITTEE OF THE ASSOCIATION.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY J. R. BIGELOW,
160 Nassau-street.
1844.

~~US13465.10.5~~
C 8035.9.5

HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

HISTORICAL SKETCH

OF THE

BAPTIST CHURCH IN STURBRIDGE.

Prepared by Rev. Joel Kenney.

It seems very desirable, in giving to the world a history of any particular church, to go back beyond the time of its organization, to notice those influences and primary causes which operated to call it into existence.

In relation to the Baptist church in Sturbridge, it is supposed to have originated from instrumentalities, that could hardly have been expected to produce such a result. About the year 1740, when the legally established churches and their ministers, with hardly an exception, had long been wrapped in spiritual slumber, the venerated George Whitefield visited these shores. He began, like a son of thunder, to break the long repose of clerical and ecclesiastical supineness, in which ministers and people were sunk. The Tenants, and other men of like precious faith, followed in his footsteps.

The truth, as it fell from their lips, had its own proper effect, in arousing the slumbering, in arresting the attention of the careless, and in making the vain and giddy, serious and thoughtful.

An extensive revival of religion spread through

a large proportion of the towns in New-England; and thousands were probably born of the Spirit in that season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. The revival went on for several years, and, in many places, the face of society was greatly changed. Many of those who embraced the power of godliness preached by those devoted men, proved to be eminently pious people. There was an integrity in their conduct, and a holiness in their demeanor, that bore living testimony to the truth of their religion.

In the instructions of the preachers of righteousness to whom reference has been made, one principle was developed which led in a direction that they did not themselves take. They taught that the Bible, and the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants. The consequences of this position, those excellent men did not, however, follow out in their full length. Guided by the light which this sentiment holds up before the mind, men began vigorously to inquire, not only, what are the great fundamental truths of christianity, but also, what are the ordinances of Christ's house? The result was, that many of the converts of those days became Baptists. Taking the Scriptures for their only guide, they arrived by a direct and plain course of reasoning at this result. This was the origin of the Baptist church in Sturbridge. Previous to the year 1747, several members of the original church in this town had caught the holy flame, which Whitefield and his associates had been instrumental in kindling. They went wherever they could hear that kind of preaching, which was thus spreading the light of life. These persons often went to Brookfield, and Leicester, and other places, to fan that holy flame which had been lighted up in their hearts, and to receive that spiritual instruction which

they did not find at home. On the tenth of May, in the year just named, several persons of this description separated from the church which was of "the standing order," and set up a meeting among themselves for their mutual edification; and in the following November, they were imbodied into a church. On the 28th of September, 1748, Mr. John Blunt, one of their members, was ordained to the pastoral charge of this recently organized church.

On the following day, two of their members, Daniel Fiske and John Newell, were chosen and ordained deacons.

Their first place of worship was a school-house, situated on Fiske Hill, not far from the spot where their first meeting-house afterwards stood.

Churches constituted as this was, were then called "*separate churches*;" and the members were called "*separates*," often, undoubtedly, by way of reproach. These separate churches were built upon the principle of receiving none into fellowship, who did not give evidence of having experienced the renewing grace of God by the influence of the Divine Spirit, a principle which was not recognised either in theory or practice by the established churches of those days.*

This church was in its origin, one of those which claimed vital and practical godliness to be an indispensable qualification for membership in a church of Christ. This principle was the whole ground of separation, in this case, as well as in many others.

At first, the church believed in, and prac-

* *Note by Chairman of the Committee.*—It may be doubted whether the facts of history will sustain in its length and breadth this statement. The "practice" of New England Churches was worse than their "theory."

tised infant sprinkling. The fact that this is not an ordinance of Scripture, probably, had never entered their minds. But still, the other principles which they had adopted, especially that of making the scriptures the supreme arbiter in religion, prepared the way for their giving up this unscriptural ceremony. Accordingly, some of the members soon began to entertain strong doubts of the correctness of their practice, in this respect, and, soon after, openly to call in question the validity of infant sprinkling. A number of the members of the church became fully convinced that the scriptures point out no other baptism than that of believers, and no other mode than that of immersion. In May 1749, thirteen of the members submitted to this ordinance, administered according to apostolic direction and practice. The ordinance was administered by Rev. Mr. Moulton of Brimfield. About fifty of the members were soon afterward baptized, including with those before mentioned the Pastor, the Deacons and the Ruling Elders. From the time of the first baptism, when the thirteen mentioned above, were baptized, the sprinkling of infants, like the house of Saul, waxed weaker; while the baptism which the scriptures require, waxed stronger and stronger; till at length, the baptism of believers, as held and practised by Baptist churches at the present day, gained the complete victory.

It will be seen by these statements, that this church was originally a Pædo-baptist church.

Within a period of about two years from the time this church was organized, more than sixty members had been baptized; thus showing that at this early period it had attained to considerable strength. For many years after the church took the ground of believers' baptism, its members held to what is called open communion. This

ground, it is supposed, was not formally and publicly relinquished till the year 1780, though probably the practice never prevailed to any great extent among them. The Presbyterian form of church government was the model by which the discipline of this church, in its early history, was conducted. Henry Fiske, and David Morse were the Ruling Elders. On their decease, it does not appear, that successors were appointed. And it is presumed, that by tacit consent, the form of government in the church, became congregational.

Up to the year 1780, no regular records of the church are to be found, and it is supposed that none had been kept. From this circumstance, which is matter of deep regret, we have no means of knowing, at this distant day, the number, or, with few exceptions, the names of the early members of the church. In 1783, Dec. 17th, the church held a meeting to consult upon the erection of a house of worship, and came to the conclusion to build. "Accordingly, a committee was chosen," to draw a plan of the house, to consult upon the method of building it, to select the place for its location, and to report to the society at their next meeting. On the 25th of the same month, they met, and voted "to accept the plan which the committee had drawn for the bigness and form of the house," and at a subsequent meeting, they resolved "to build on the height of land on Fiske's Hill." This ground was given and deeded to the church and society, for the use to which it was applied for almost half a century, by Henry Fiske, one of the Ruling Elders of the church. The building was raised, and the outside finished in the summer of 1784, and the inside was completed two years after. One thing is calculated to excite surprise and regret, in the transactions

concerning the building of this house. It was that they should vote, "to purchase half a barrel of rum for the raising of the meeting-house."—Thanks to God, that the times and customs in this respect, have changed :—and that they were changed before the erection of their present house of worship, so that this was raised without the furnishing of any such pernicious appendage.

Up to the time that the Rev. Zenas L. Leonard commenced his labors with this people, the church were but partially supplied with the ministration of God's word. The pulpit was supplied at different periods, by different men, among whom, were Messrs. Dodge, Baldwin, Rathbun, Root, and perhaps some others. In 1794 Rev. Z. L. Leonard, a native of Bridgewater, and a graduate of Brown University, came to this place. After laboring a considerable time with this church by which means they became well acquainted with his talents, and moral and religious character, he received a pressing invitation to become their Pastor, which, after three months serious and prayerful reflection, he accepted, and was accordingly ordained, Sept. 15th, 1796. From that time he continued the faithful and beloved pastor of the church, till Oct. 13, 1832, when, in consequence of an inscrutable providence of God, by which his mental faculties, in the full strength of manhood, became impaired, he asked and obtained dismission from the pastoral office.

Thirty-six years and one month, he sustained the relation of Pastor to this church. And during this period, he labored not in vain in the Lord. As nearly as can be ascertained by the records, there were added in this time to the church, 229 persons : of this number, 205 were added by baptism, and of this last number, *he* probably baptized 176. From the time of his dismission from

the pastoral office, his health continued to decline, and under the influence of a gradual paralysis of the brain, he became nearly senseless some time before his death. He died June 23d, 1841. He enjoyed not only the love and confidence of the church and congregation, over whom he was placed as a religious teacher, but also the confidence and respect of the citizens of the town, whose interests he was frequently called to represent and sustain in the Legislature of our state. As a *man*, he was intelligent, patriotic, courteous, and judicious; as a husband, affectionate, kind and social; as a father, possessed of paternal affection and kindness, blended with a suitable authority and decision; as a christian, conscientious, circumspect and devout; and as a minister, sound in doctrine, consistent in practice, faithful and persevering in his ministrations, clear and forcible in his illustrations, strong in faith; ready on emergencies, self-denying and cross-bearing. But a more faithful record of his character, labors and success during the thirty-six years of his ministry with this people, is on high, where his departed spirit has gone to receive its reward.

From the record of the reception of members into the church, it appears, that this people were favored with as many as eight special outpourings of the Divine Spirit, during the fifty years subsequent to 1780, when the first *regular* records of the church were commenced. On the 5th of Nov. in that year, venerable Simeon Fiske was received. He continued a member more than half a century, and saw most of the vicissitudes of joy and sorrow, through which the church passed. During the two following years 23 persons were added; the first of whom was the venerable Jonathan Phillips, long a deacon of the church.

In 1783–4, only nine were added to the flock.—It was during the last mentioned year, that Mr. Jordan Dodge came to Sturbridge, who, on the 27th of Oct. of the same year, was ordained pastor of the church. During the first three years of his ministry, the church prospered considerably. He is said to have been a fervent, and energetic speaker, having unusual command over the feelings of his audience. But his moral character at length falling under censure, he was dismissed from his pastoral office in 1788, and silenced from preaching soon after. In 1785, twelve were added to the number of the church, among whom was our venerable father, deacon John Phillips. During the ten succeeding years, there seems to have been no special revival, as during this period, only 34 were received into the fellowship of the church. During the year 1796, 32 united with the church. From this time to 1810, no special revival was enjoyed, and only 15 were added during the whole period of 13 years.

But in 1810, there must have been a glorious display of divine grace, for 27 persons were received. From 1811 to 1815, there is no record of any extensive attention to the great and chief concern of man. During this time only eight entered into covenant with the church. In the course of the year 1815, 17 persons were added. In 1817 this church was blest with another revival, and an accession of 49 was received. Many of these resided in Brookfield, and were soon after imbodied in the church there. The work continued in some degree the following year, and nine persons were added. From this time to 1825, only seven were added to the church. In 1826 another great work of grace prevailed in the town, and 38 new members of this church were the fruits of it. From that year to 1831, no special atten-

tion among this people, and only nine were added to this church. During the years 1831–2, 29 persons joined the church. From this time, till 1836, 20 united with the church, of whom only six by baptism, showing that during these four years, no special revival was enjoyed. Twenty-three more were added, mostly by baptism, during the year 1836. From that time till 1840, forty-two united with the church. In 1840, ten were added.

In 1841, a glorious revival was enjoyed most of the year, and 29 were added, most of whom as the precious fruits of renewing grace. And during the year 1842, twenty-one were added.

The largest number of members since 1802 as appears from the "minutes," is 180, and the smallest is 81, that being the number in the year 1809. The records show a large number dismissed from this church to others. Many of these were dismissed to form other churches in the neighborhood. During the years 1817 and 1818, nearly 70 were dismissed to form churches in Southbridge, Holland and Brookfield; this reduced their number in 1818, to 91, yet since that time the number has more than doubled:—the present number being 187. And the three churches above mentioned which were formed from this, now contain nearly 400 members.

This church, and the society connected with it, have had successively three meeting-houses. The first was originally a school-house, but subsequently enlarged and converted into a house of worship. The two first were located on Fiske hill; the last, which was built in 1832, and dedicated on the second Wednesday in January, 1833, was located in the centre of the town. In 1838, the church and society entertaining the opinion that their interests and the cause of Christ would be

promoted by the removal of their meeting-house to Fiske Dale village, passed a vote to this effect, on the twenty-fifth of June. Accordingly the house was moved to its present location, nearly two miles from its former site, at an expense of something more than $1000, to a spot of ground given to the church for this purpose, by J. J. Fiske, Esq. near the residence of Major Simeon Drake.

During the present year, (1842,) the house, having been struck with lightning, and injured to a considerable extent, has undergone a thorough repair, at an expense of about $300.

In regard to the support of public worship, this church in former times did not do as much as they have for a few years past; yet, probably they did as much as others of like ability, and that too, more cheerfully. The records of the Society show that in the early part of Rev. Mr. Leonard's ministry, this people were in the habit of raising $200 a year for his support, and that this was done by an assessment. Subsequently, they adopted the very unequal method of raising funds for the support of preaching by subscription. This practice was followed for more than twenty years, but generally with only indifferent success. A weekly collection was also resorted to for some time, but as it did not prove successful it was soon relinquished. Their present mode of defraying the expenses of public worship, is to rent the slips in the meeting house, and make an assessment on the members of the church according to their property, to supply the deficiency. Though this church have generally been a united people, and have followed the things that make for peace, yet they have not been exempt from trials and afflictions. Often in the circumstances surrounding them, have clouds and darkness been round about the throne of the Almighty. They have suffered

at times, and sometimes for a long season together, for want of the stated ministry of the word.

This church, during a few of the first years of its existence, had the labors of a settled pastor. But in a few years he relinquished his labors among them, and left them destitute. And there is reason to believe that the ways of Zion have mourned for a great part of the time, for twenty-five years previous to 1780. For several years, a preacher by the name of Reynolds used to visit them about once in two months, and preach and break bread to the church. There is no evidence remaining, that his ministry here met with much success. About the year 1774, he embraced the doctrine of the final restoration of sinners from hell, on the plan of Elhanan Winchester. Upon this, the church refused to hold communion with him, or to receive his labors any longer; considering it preferable to fail of the administration of the ordinances of the gospel, rather than receive them at the hands of a man of such dangerous opinions. From 1774 to 1780, it is believed that the church did not enjoy a single season of meeting together at the table of the Lord. The records of this last mentioned year state that the church had been harassed and perplexed with difficulties of several years standing, and had not received the communion. At length they began to be concerned for the honor of religion; and accordingly called a council to settle difficulties. The churches sent to, were Suffield, Wilbraham, and Ashford. The church unanimously acceded to the decision of the council, and from this time the church went forward and seemed to prosper. Notwithstanding all these things, some of the surrounding churches doubted the reality of an existing regular church in this place. This prompted them to send to it a number of neighboring churches, to gain a more general

fellowship. The churches sent to, were Charlton, South Brimfield, Woodstock, Pomfret, Ashfield and Suffield. The result of this council was, that "notwithstanding all imperfections, this body is a regular gospel church."

Thus we have the first public recognition of this as a Baptist church, thirty-one years after its existence as such began. From this time till 1794, they were but partially supplied. This was the year the Rev. Mr. Leonard, their late beloved pastor, providentially passed this way on a journey westward. He, as before mentioned, after some months, decided to settle with them.

This was the dawn of better days. The sun of prosperity now rose on this people, and dispelled the thick darkness that for many years, had brooded over them with almost unbroken sway.

About the year 1768, there was a secession from this church. The whole ground of the secession cannot, perhaps, at this distant day, be fully ascertained. But it is known, that a part, at least, of the ground of this separation was, a division in regard to the terms of communion; the seceders believing the laying on of hands to be necessary to authorize an individual to come to the table of the Lord; while the remaining members of the church, though they had no material objection to the practice, yet were decidedly opposed to making it one of the terms of admission to the Lord's Table. A church was formed of those members who held the necessity of laying on of hands. The seat of this church of seceders near where Mr. John McKinstry now lives, in the north part of Southbridge.

That church belonged to the Warren Association long before this church ever joined it. In the year of the organization of the seceding church, Mr. William Ewing, a native of Scotland, and a

sound preacher, was ordained in what is now the Globe Village in Sturbridge. He remained there some years, and the new church flourished under his ministry.

Mr. Ewing was never Pastor of this church, as he is intimated, by Mr. Backus to have been. His whole connexion, while he remained in this town, was with the seceding church. After that church had existed a few years, a series of difficulties arose, which laid the foundation of its dissolution, soon after Mr. Ewing left it. This body ceased to exist as a church about the year 1775. Some of the first and best men in the Baptist Church in Sturbridge, were members of it.—Among them were Messrs. John Correy and Jonathan Phillips.

After the dissolution of the seceding church, many of its members united with this church, and went on with them in harmony. All that is known of the early ministers of this church is soon told. Their first minister, as before remarked, was Mr. John Blunt. Under his ministry the church was somewhat numerous, and embraced, undoubtedly, a very principal part of the vital piety in the town. Sometime after the body of the church had embraced Baptist principles, and Mr. Blunt among the rest, several separate ministers of Connecticut, by the most appalling representations of the sin of being re-baptized, prevailed with him to renounce the views of baptism which he had embraced. The consequence was, that he left his people; and for aught that appears, he renounced the labors of the ministry. In the French war he joined the army as a private soldier, and continued till that of the revolution. He fell by the hand of an Indian, near Lake George, Sept. 8th, 1775. Mr. Blunt, like most of the separates, and Baptist ministers of his day, was a plain, un-

lettered man. He was not reputed a man of superior talents; nor is it supposed that he ever rose to any eminence as a preacher. But he had the reputation of being honest and upright, pious and devout.

There was one time a Mr. Barstow in this church, who was a licensed preacher. But whether he ever preached statedly to the church here, is not ascertained.

There was also a Mr. Bloyce, a licensed preacher, connected with this church. But he left the place more than eighty years ago. These both were unlearned men, but their memory is respected for their consistent piety.

Since Rev. Mr. Leonard ceased to officiate as the minister of this people, they have had four different Pastors, and two or three other ministers have labored with them for a little season.

Rev. Abiel Fisher labored with them about a year; received a call to become their pastor, but declined the invitation. After he left, the church gave Rev. Addison Parker, of Southbridge, an invitation to settle with them; with which he complied, and was installed Jan. 9th, 1833. His salary was $400 per annum.

Mr. Parker continued the Pastor of the church till Dec. 12th, 1835, when by his request, he was dismissed, and recommnded to the church in Methuen, who had repeatedly solicited him to become their pastor. After Rev. Mr. Parker left, the church remained destitute of a Pastor, till the next August, when the Rev. Isaac Merriam, of Me., who had been previously invited to become their Pastor, signified his acceptance of their invitation. His continuance with the church was short. He was dismissed the last of Jan. 1837. For a few months after Mr. Parker left, and before Mr. Merriam came, the

church enjoyed the labors of Rev. William Dennis, which were apparently blessed of God to the awakening of many sinners, and their hopeful conversion. In April, 1837, the church obtained the services of Mr. Orrin O. Stearns, who was then a member of the senior class in Brown University. He supplied the desk during the summer; and July 30th received an invitation to become their pastor, which he accepted; and was ordained Sept. 25th, 1837. He remained connected with the church in pastoral relation, till Oct. 14th, 1839, when he resigned his office. In the settlement of Mr. Stearns, the church, for the first time, gave a salary of $500, which is the sum they still raise for the support of their minister.

The church, from this time were but partially supplied with preaching, till May 1840, when they invited Rev. Joel Kenney, of Wenham, to visit them as a candidate for settlement. After supplying them a few Sabbaths, he was invited to become their Pastor;—he accepted their invitation, and entered upon his duties as the Pastor of the church, June 14th, 1840. He still remains the Pastor of the church.

In giving a faithful outline of the Baptist church in Sturbridge, the truth cannot be concealed, and charity does not require us to conceal it, that the fathers of this church, suffered the spoiling of their goods, for the support of an ecclesiastical polity, in which they were not represented, and which they believed the Scriptures did not authorize. This spoiling of goods, subjected them to the loss of several hundred pounds' property wrested from them, and sacrificed by persons who had no just right to it. Nor can it be denied that several members of this church have been shut up in prison, for no other crime than that of declining to support a minister, whom

they did not hear. The men are yet living whose excellent fathers, like Paul and Silas, prayed and sang praises to God in prison. And so struck was the jailer with the eminent piety of the venerated Fiske and Corry, when they were imprisoned together, that he declared, that if the legal authorities did not release them, he would throw open the prison doors and set them free.

This is not the first time that the piety of men imprisoned, on account of their religion, has made a salutary impression on the mind of their jailer.

The same thing occurred in the times of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is moreover true, that Mr. Moulton of Brimfield, for preaching in this town, was seized as a vagabond and thrown into prison. But on this painful topic enough has been said.

Thanks to God, that better days have fallen to our lot. The principles of religious liberty, in the defence of which Roger Williams dared to face almost the whole of christendom, have, at length, become so established in the minds of our countrymen, that all persons, who demean themselves as peaceable citizens, can safely think and act, in their religious concerns, accountable to no human tribunal.

To show the estimation in which one of these sufferers was afterwards held in the town from a majority of whose inhabitants he had suffered the spoiling of his goods, and the detention of his body in prison, though his sentiments remained unchanged, let it be remembered, that Deacon Daniel Fiske, in the time of his country's peril, in the early part of the Revolutionary war, was entrusted with the responsible charge of representing this town in the General Court of Massachusetts. He died a member of the house of Assembly in 1778. In proportion to their numbers, it is

believed that the members of the Baptist church in this town, have for more than half a century had their full share of influence, and respectability in the community.

The deacons of this church have been, Daniel Fiske, John Newall, Jonathan Phillips, Henry Fiske, John Phillips, Jonathan Lyon, Moses Fiske, Prince Brachett. Their present pastor, 1844, is Rev. J. Woodbury.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN WALES.

(Formerly South Brimfield, Mass.)

Compiled mainly from papers furnished by Rev. George Mixter.

This church, the most ancient of the churches of the Sturbridge Association, was constituted in the year 1736, and at that time embraced about thirty members. Its first minister was the Rev. Ebenezer Moulton, a member of the church, who received ordination as its pastor Nov. 4, 1741. Joseph Hovey and Benjamin Johnson were the deacons. Mr. Moulton continued in the pastoral office until the year 1763, when he removed to Nova Scotia where he resided about fifteen years. He afterwards returned to South Brimfield and died among the people of his former charge in 1783. He, like many others of his times, was a victim of the persecutions under which the non-conformists of Massachusetts suffered, and which fell with especial weight upon the Baptists. It seems that he took part in the preliminary measures which resulted in the establishment of the Baptist church in Sturbridge. Here he preached and baptized, and for grave offences of this character, he was

seized by the constable as a stroller and vagabond, and dragged from the town to prison.

The early prosperity of this church was brief. In the year 1748, after serious difficulties, the church became divided and so remained for a period of more than twenty years. In the year 1765, the Rev. James Mellen of Middleborough became its pastor, but continued in the office but a short time. Subsequently the Rev. Mr. Ewing preached to them occasionally. In 1771 the church was re-organized, and at the sitting of the Warren Association, with which this church was at that time connected, at Middleborough, in Sept. 1772, its delegates were instructed to inquire for a pastor. As the result, as it is supposed, of this inquiry, Mr. Elijah Coddington of Middleborough visited them the following year, and after a brief stay with them, was chosen to the pastoral office. The ordaining council met Nov. 10, 1773, for his examination, and the next day he was set apart to the sacred office. He preached his own ordination sermon from 2 Timothy 4 : 2.

The removal of Mr. Coddington's family to South Brimfield took place in December following, and as his *entree* into South Brimfield was quite an incident, and characteristic of the imposing forms of other days, a notice of the event from his own description will not be unwelcome. It seems that on the night of Dec. 7, 1773, he reached Capt. Dresser's in Charlton, distant about twenty miles from South Brimfield. On the 8th himself and family were met by a delegation of about a dozen persons who came forth to conduct the ministerial household to their residence. In this escort they were aided by the select men and other principal inhabitants of the town. As the company approached the appointed dwelling, a group of men and women came forth from it, and open-

ing to the right and left, formed an avenue through which a select escort led the minister and attendants into the house. Here they found "an elegant and sumptuous entertainment," and thus ended the domestic inauguration.

The church, which at this time was in a languishing condition, soon began to revive and receive accessions. Within the space of three years, commencing Sept. 12, 1779, which was in the midst of the Revolution, above two hundred were were added to the church by baptism. At this time it extended over a large territory embracing several towns. Not unfrequently attendants at Divine worship came ten or fifteen miles, and ministers and delegates eighty or a hundred miles to sit in council.

But this period of unusual religious interest and increase was followed by one of declension and diminution. Members living at a distance, and not attending the services of the sanctuary and the ordinances of the church, languished in consequence, and it became the duty of the church to cut them off from its fellowship. In process of time however, Baptist churches were organized in the neighboring towns, and these wanderers from the flock were many of them gathered once more within the fold. It is believed that at no time since the Revolution has the number of members been as large as at that period. It is, however, a gratifying reflection that this church sustains the relation of a parent to several of the churches around it, and may account for an honorable diminution in the fact of their increase.

In 1819-20 they were revived and fifty added by baptism.

Mr. Coddington was pastor of this church 53 years. He was chaplain of the Regiment ten years, and taught school ten terms. He officiated

at 315 marriages, which was a large number in so small a town.

Father Coddington was succeeded in the pastoral office in 1826 by the Rev. Joshua Eveleth, who continued with the church three years. In 1829 the Rev. John M. Hunt became the pastor. From 1830 to 1833 the pastoral office was vacant. During this time however, they enjoyed the ministerial labors of Rev. Messrs. Bela Hicks, Alvin Bennett, and Tubal Wakefield, the last of whom became their pastor in 1834, and continued with them two years. In 1836 the Rev. Geo. Mixter became their pastor and remained with them until 1842, during which time thirty-five were added by baptism. In 1842 the Rev. Warren Cooper was elected pastor. His health however soon failed, and he was succeeded in 1843 by the Rev. Volney Church, whose labors this church is now enjoying.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN HARDWICK AND WARE, MASS.

Compiled from materials furnished by Mr. Ebenezer Burt, Jr.

In the month of Nov. 1796, Mr. Ebenezer Burt, a licensed preacher of the Baptist denomination came to Hardwick to reside, and preached occasionally in his own house. On the 8th of March, 1798, an Ecclesiastical council, composed of delegates from the churches in Shutesbury, New-Salem, and the portion of Hardwick since called Dana, was called, who after deliberation proceeded to organize a Baptist society, consisting of eight members. After this, the Society met statedly for public worship. In the month of April, the society having considerably increased, a

meeting was held, at which it was determined to call a council for the ordination of Mr. Burt. This council, composed ofd elegates from the churches in Dighton, Shutesbury, New-Salem, Belchertown and Dana, met on the 20th of June, and after examination, proceeded to ordain Mr. Burt, the Rev. Enoch Goff preaching on the occasion from Romans 10 : 14, 15.

The services were held in the open air, around a rock which crowned an eminence, and served as a convenient pulpit. It was a scene of rural beauty, and an occasion of deep solemnity. At this time and for a season following, a revival of religion was enjoyed and several were converted. During this revival Mr. Burt received an invitation from Congregational brethren to preach on the subject of baptism, which he did accordingly; taking for a pulpit a large stump in the open field, no building at their command being of sufficiet size to contain the audience, and for his text 1 Peter 3 : 21. "The like figure," &c. Soon after some 20 were baptized, and recognised as a branch of the Baptist Church in Dana. The society still increasing, a Meeting-house was erected in April, 1801, and rendered tolerably convenient, though not entirely finished. In September following a council composed of Delegates from the churches in Belchertown, Shutesbury, Leverett, New-Salem, and Dana (the mother church,) recognised this branch as a distinct church, the Rev. Elijah Montague, pastor of the Leverett church, preaching on the occasion from Mat. 16 : 18. At the same time the Rev. Mr. Burt was installed pastor. The church at its organization consisted of eight males and twelve females. In October following, Daniel Lamsen and Seth Willis were chosen deacons. From this time to 1803 the church gradually increased to

forty-one members, when it became connected with the Sturbridge Association, which had been formed two years previous. For several years the church continued united and prosperous, Mr. Burt laboring with them three fourths of the time, though nothing of special interest occurred till 1810, when a glorious revival was experienced, and as the result of this spiritual refreshing, sixty-four members were brought into the church. But the day of adversity was fast approaching. In June, 1811, a party was led off by one of the deacons who had made unsuccessful application for a license to preach. In 1814 another serious difficulty occurred, which rent the church in twain, both parties claiming to be the church. Councils were called in vain, and in 1815 the association dropped the name of the Hardwick church from the minutes. "This act of the Association [which it seems was done without any investigation, on the appearance of two delegations claiming seats] gave the accusing party great latitude, who went about like a roaring lion, seeking to devour Mr. Burt and the portion of the church which remained with him. About this time Mr.——— who was the leader of the party from the time of their revolt, published a scandalous and ridiculous book against Mr. Burt, slandering him in the basest manner." Such is the emphatic language in which a son, keenly sensible of injuries done to a venerated father, speaks of these transactions, and the fact that it is endorsed by vote of the church would certainly indicate that a son's feelings have not led him astray.

For a long period the church groaned under difficulties. In 1820 the association, having made an investigation restored the name of the church to its minutes. Their numbers were wasted away to 63. During these trials however, occasional

conversions had taken place, and some were added who remain till the present time ornaments to religion. From 1820 to 1827 the trials of the church continued—sometimes the preaching of the word, and the other ordinances of the church were altogether neglected.

In May, 1827, it was resolved by the church to seek advice, and brethren from abroad were invited for that purpose.—They came, and having investigated the condition of the church, they determined that in view of long accumulated prejudices and the spiritual apathy of the church, it was expedient for Mr. Burt to retire from his pastoral charge, and for the church to take measures to procure a successor. Mr. Burt asked a dismission, and retired from a post which he had held for more than a quarter of a century, with no compensation save the free-will offerings of a people who had little to give. In that retirement he still continues, in venerable old age.

From this period to 1829 the church enjoyed the ministerial labors of Rev. Messrs. Marshall, Eveleth, Skinner, and Barret, the last of whom in 1829 became their pastor. In 1827 or 28 the name of the church was changed to that of Hardwick and Ware. In the latter year twelve were baptized, and in the year following eight. In 1830 Mr. L. Austin preached to this church one half of the time, alternately at Ware village and Hardwick. In 1831 the Rev. Joseph Glazier was installed pastor, and a revival enjoyed in which twenty-nine were added by baptism. In 1832 a new and commodious meeting-house was built, and notwithstanding the enterprise seemed forbidding, the union and prosperity of the church made the burden a pleasure. The prosperity of the church continued from year to year—many were converted and received to the company of

disciples. In 1835 Mr. Glazier requested a dismission on account of ill health. From this time till 1837 the church had occasional preaching, Messrs. Brown and Bennett supplying about one half of the time. Rev. N. B. Jones became pastor in 1837, and was dismissed at his own request in 1840. For about a year their pulpit was supplied by their old pastor, the Rev. Mr. Burt, and in Dec. 1841, they recalled to the pastoral office the Rev. Mr. Glazier, under whose ministry they went on their way rejoicing.

This church has been like the bush in Midian. It stands as a monument of the Divine care. Notwithstanding its adversities, it has enjoyed some eight or ten revivals in a period of less than half a century, and about two hundred and twenty have been added to it by baptism. Its pecuniary means have always been limited, and it has struggled likewise with local disadvantages. Many have gone elsewhere who but for these circumstances would have connected themselves with this people. Though in a sparse population it is an important position. There is no other Baptist church within several miles, and it is three miles to the nearest meeting-house of any order. May the little one become a thousand!

Daniel Lamson and Seth Willis, the first Deacons, have been succeeded by Benj. Rider, Esek Brown, Enos Newland, Joseph Metcalf, Henry Higgins, John Pepper, John Chamberlain, and Dean Gray.

The clerks have been Moses Winchester, Elisha Sturtevant, Henry Higgins, and E. Burt, Jr.

Two ordained ministers have proceeded from this church.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN DUDLEY, NOW WEBSTER, MASS.

This church which is comparatively recent in its origin, is far from giving the date of the commencement of Baptist sentiments and Baptist influences in this place. These were nearly or quite coeval with the corporate existence of the town. It was incorporated by the general court in 1731 ; in 1732, the congregational church was constituted, and in 1744, i. e. twelve years afterwards, the following certificate was handed in to the clerk and assessors of the town.

"A true list of the names of the members of the Baptist Church in Dudley. Joseph Wakefield, Benjamin Putney, Paul Robinson, Silas Robinson, Jonathan Putney, and the names of them that attend meeting, Francis Curtis, John Curtis, William Wakefield. This is to certify to the town clerk of Dudley and assessors of said town, that we have chosen Paul Robinson and Francis Curtis to see that the assessors give order to the constable of Dudley not to take any taxes of the brethren nor of any of the society of the Baptist church to support your minister, or defray ministerial charges, or for erecting any place of worship for your society. May 21, 1744.

Jonathan Marsh, clerk of Baptist church.
James Coats, brother of the church.

Entered on the records of the town of Dudley, Sept. 16, 1746."

For the above extracts the compiler gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness to Geo. B. Slater, Esq.

Little can be learned concerning this church at the present time. For a season, it was the hal-

lowed object around which clustered the pious sympathies and prayers of its members. It was to them a Zion, the place where God was known. Yet, considering the trying circumstances and adverse influences with which it must at that time have been surrounded, we are not surprised to know that for a period it struggled for a feeble existence, and finally became extinct. Baptist sentiments however, survived the extinction of this church organization; and from that time to the present, there have not been wanting those who have earnestly contended for this faith which they believe to have been once delivered to the saints.

Soon after the termination of the Revolutionary war, when the minds of the good, turning away from the scenes of bloodshed and slaughter, naturally reverted to the God of the oppressed who had vindicated their cause, these sentiments were again revived, and the preaching of them became comparatively frequent. Now, Rev. John Martin of Thompson, Ct., occasionally visited the place and preached the gospel. Elder Bachelder, Elder Shing, and Elder Samuel Waters of Sutton, were also fellow laborers and unitedly sowed precious seed which sprang up and bore precious fruit. These laborers prepared the way for constituting a church. In 1790, Baptist meetings had become frequent in the part of the town now incorporated and known as Webster. In 1798 a church was organized, and Mr. Solomon Wakefield, a resident in the place, was ordained to the work of the gospel ministry; not, however, as pastor, yet with the understanding that he would labor with the church in word and doctrine.

Elder Wakefield held some views not in perfect harmony with those of the majority of his brethren. He was a member of the Baptist church in Thompson, Ct., but his more strictly Calvinis-

tic brethren complained of him as inclining to, and teaching Arminian doctrines, and so far did they diverge from each other in doctrinal opinions as essentially to disturb the harmony of the church, and impair the influence of the preacher. The church was still further depressed by internal divisions, so that most of the members withdrew and returned to the church in Thompson, from which they had been dismissed. Thus failed the second attempt to establish a Baptist church in Dudley. It enjoyed a limited prosperity by the accession of a few members—existed long enough to illustrate the sad consequences of disunion in the church of Christ, and then ceased to be. It was never connected with any associated body of churches.

In 1810-12 the interest was again revived. Rev. Mr. Crosby, then pastor of the church in Thompson, preached as often as other engagements would allow, and encouraged the brethren to combined christian effort. About this time also Elder Grow, then pastor of the church in Pomphret, Ct., preached several times in the place with great acceptance and success. In the course of the year 1813, Elder Paul, a colored brother, preached and baptized. During the latter part of this year, and the beginning of 1814, an interesting work of grace was enjoyed. Meetings were frequent. They were held in private houses —in a school house, and in the upper loft of a factory which had been newly erected, but not being filled with machinery, was kindly offered and occupied for the same purpose. Of this revival, a very full and interesting account is furnished in the Baptist Miss. Magazine for Sept. 1814.— After speaking of the revival in Thompson, it is added, "The same good work made its appearance in the adjoining town of Dudley, in which

the word of God had been preached by Elder Paul, a colored brother, accompanied with divine power, and made effectual, as we have reason to hope, to many souls. The revival here was equally powerful as in Thompson; and although the weather for the most part was very disagreeable, the meetings (which were almost every day held) were so uncommonly crowded that many could not get within hearing of the speaker's voice." In another place it is added, "March 24th, 1814, Elder Dwinell baptized ten candidates at Dudley. April 13, Rev. Mr. Gano of Providence, baptized seven more in Dudley; when he preached from Acts 4:33." And again, it is added:—"On the 26 June, Elder Grow preached at Dudley and baptized three, thus making a sum total of twenty joyful converts baptized in this neighborhood as the fruits of the revival." It appears from the concurrent testimony of those who participated in this season of Zion's prosperity, that the labors of no one were more signally blessed of God than those of Elder Paul. At this time, too, the erection of several factories in the neighborhood had considerably increased the population, and brought several baptist members into the place.

In view of these circumstances the friends of Zion began to feel themselves impressed with the duty of raising more publicly the banner of the gospel, and constituting themselves into a christian church. Accordingly, in October, 1814, a council was convened for the purpose of giving the hand of fellowship to a number of brethren and sisters as a church of Christ, if, after mature deliberation, they should think it proper to do so. The following is a copy of the doings of that council.

"By letters missive from a joint committee chosen by the first Baptist church of Christ in Sutton, and also the Baptist church of Christ in

Thompson, Ct., to a number of neighboring churches requesting them to send delegates to meet at the new school house in the eastern part of Dudley, on Wednesday, October 26, 1814, for the purpose of giving fellowship to a number of brethren and sisters in the vicinity, belonging to the above said churches, as a church of Christ, if they should think proper. Brethren from the following churches convened at the time and place above mentioned, and formed themselves into a council by choosing Rev. Wm. Bentley, moderator, and Rev. Zenas L. Leonard, scribe. The following churches were fully represented, viz: Sutton, Thompson, Worcester, Charlton, Sturbridge and Pomphret. Eder L. Goddard and brethren I. T. Tollman, and J. Walker, were also invited to a seat and acted with the council. The ministers present from the churches represented were Rev. P. Crosby, Thompson; Rev. Wm. Bentley, Worcester; Rev. J. Boomer, Charlton; Rev. Z. L. Leonard, Sturbridge; and Rev. J. Grow, Pomphret." From the minutes of this council we learn that after being informed there were fifty-five brethren and sisters belonging to Sutton and Thompson churches, now living in this vicinity, who wished to unite and form a new church, and also that they had received letters from their respective churches for this purpose, and after examining their articles of faith and covenant, and being satisfied therewith, the council voted to give their fellowship as a church of Christ in sister relation. That this church had its origin under highly encouraging auspices will be inferred from what has already been said: to which we may add that it was the only church in the vicinity, and that it showed the general favor of the people.

Eight months after the organization of the

church viz : June 15, 1815, one of the members, (brother Esek Brown) was set apart to the work of the gospel ministry by solemn ordination. He assumed the pastoral care of the little flock. Previously to this, however, at a church meeting, Nov. 8, 1814, brethren Stephen Bartlett and Nathaniel Crosby were chosen deacons, though they did not signify their acceptance of the office till July 6, 1815, which was after the ordination of Mr. Brown. Deacon Crosby removed from the place in 1816, but retained his connexion with the church till Aug 1818, when he was dismissed to unite with the Baptist church in Pomphret, N. Y. During his residence with us he discharged faithfully the duties both of clerk and deacon of the church.

In further pursuing this historical sketch, we shall observe, for the sake of convenience and definitiveness, the following divisions of time.

1. The period of Mr. Brown's ministry.
2. The interval between the resignation of Mr. Brown and the settlement of Mr. Ballard.
3. From the settlement of Mr. Ballard to the death of the Rev. T. Barrett.
4. The interval between this event and the settlement of Mr. Leonard.
5. The period of Mr. Leonard's ministry.

1. The period of Mr. Brown's ministry was one of comparative prosperity. The church had just experienced the hallowed influence of a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and there seems to have been much of the fervor of first love burning in the bosoms of most of her members. Of their pastor it may be said (especially now that he has gone to his rest,) he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith. This period is characterized by union of sentiment and

of action—strictness of discipline, and a close adherence to the doctrines of the gospel.

Yet with the vigor and buoyancy of youth, there seems to have been some of its inexperience. Cases of discipline and church censure were, perhaps, unnecessarily frequent: in the attempt to remove the tares, the wheat was in some cases disturbed, if not rooted up. Mr. Brown remained with the church three years and three months, during which period there were baptized into the church six persons, received by letter, seven; restored, one; dismissed, four; died, two; excluded two; leaving the whole number of members sixty-one. Net gain during this period, six members.

2. The next period, from the resignation of Mr. Brown to the settlement of Mr. Ballard constitutes a term of seven years and four months. During all this time the church was destitute of the labors of a pastor. It was a season of varied prosperity and deep depression. Their first minister, Mr. Brown, who was warmly attached to the church, and beloved by all, had been obliged to leave solely in consequence of the inability, or *supposed* inability to render such a support as would enable him to give himself wholly to prayer and the ministry of the word. He was succeeded by a brother Lewis. T. Seamans, of Thompson, Con. a man of undoubted piety and discretion, who labored a portion of the time for several months as a transient supply, with much acceptance and success. At this time Mr. S. had not received ordination. He was interrupted in his labors, both by occasional absence and ill health, yet was the word which he spake attended by a divine influence, and made effectual in the salvation of souls. The first year seven were baptized as the fruits of his labors, and the year following twenty-six more

were added to their number. In connexion with him Elder Nichols and Elder Ross supplied the desk a portion of the time. Mr. Seamans was now obliged by ill health, entirely to relinquish his ministerial duties, but left the church, enjoying (to use their own language) "great peace," and we may believe, much spirituality. He was succeeded by a Mr. Wilson, who had then recently become connected with the church by leaving the Methodist connexion; but the successor exhibited little of the spirit of the good man who had preceded him. For a few months he officiated in the sacred office; and then in a most reproachful and unchristian manner, publicly declared his connexion with the church to be dissolved, while the subsequent developments of his moral character deepened the wound which his impetuosity had inflicted. The church now became disheartened, and seems for a considerable time to have been destitute even of a "stated supply," and the utmost that was enjoyed was occasional preaching by transient individuals. The state of the church at this period furnishes a painful illustration of the value and necessity of a wise and pious ministry.—There were resources in the church, but they needed to be developed—there were praying and faithful christians, but they needed "Some one to guide them." They were as sheep without a shepherd. About four years after Mr. Seamans retired (the same gentleman who had labored with so much success,) he returned again to the place; but he was able to do little more than mourn over the spiritual desolation of Zion, and lay down his armor to rest from his labors. He slept in Jesus, and his body was deposited in this field of his early toils and successes. About this period Elder Goddard supplied a portion of the time for the space of a year, and others more transient, occasionally spake

the words of life to such as came together to hear.

During this period one deacon was chosen, and one died. The dismission of deacon Crosby to the Baptist church in Pomphret, N. Y., Aug. 1818, has already been mentioned: and in June, 1820, his place was filled by the choice of brother Willard Howland to be his successor in the office of deacon. In this office deacon Howland served the church for the space of eleven years, and it may truly be said that during this period he bore faithfully the burden and the heat of the day. Few have been more afflicted than this servant of Christ, both by sickness and repeated deaths in his family, and we trust it is not too much for us to say, that he has learned both submission and obedience by the things which he has suffered. He is still one of our number, and for this reason we leave the more full expression of his services in behalf of the church to those who shall come after us.

During this period, and while the church was already much depressed from causes which have been mentioned, they were called to mourn the loss of their much esteemed deacon Stephen Bartlett, who departed this life April, 1824. Almost from the first organization of the church he had served as deacon:—he was eminently humble, exemplary and pious; and by a faithful discharge of the duties of his station, purchased to himself a good degree and great boldness in the faith.—Like the seven holy men who were first appointed to this service, it might be said of him, that he was a man of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom; and his loss was deeply felt and much lamented. But amid all the gloom and discouragement of this period, the lamp of piety was not suffered to go out; and towards its close, the church which had hitherto held its meet-

ings in a school house. began to feel deeply anxious for a more convenient edifice in which to worship God. Accordingly, in 1825-6, a united vigorous effort was made for this purpose: and after much toil and many trials, a house was dedicated to Almighty God, Dec. 1826. Previous, however, to its accomplishment, and while the hearts of the people were directed to the house of God, they were led to feel deeply their need of some one to go in and out before them as an under shepherd, and accordingly invited the Rev. John B. Ballard to become their pastor and teacher. He entered upon his labors Dec. 1825. During the period of which we have now spoken (seven years and four months) there were added by baptism, thirty-seven; by letter three; dismissed, thirteen; died, eight; excluded four; dropped, thirteen; leaving the whole number of members sixty-three. Net gain two members.

3. The next period, extending from the commencement of Mr. Ballard's labors, to the death of Rev. T. Barrett, includes a term of six years and eight months. The commencement of Mr. Ballard's ministry may be considered as an era with the church. Long and dreary had been the night through which they had passed; destitute of any one to care for their spiritual state, they had been guided only by an unseen hand. Yet now the light began to shine more clearly around them —a house in which to worship God was erecting, and again were they blessed with the gift of a pastor and teacher. With this happy change in their outward affairs, they seem to have gained fresh confidence in the protecting care of God, and deeply to have felt that the set time to favor Zion had indeed arrived. Ont he other hand the erecting of an earthly sanctuary had involved the brethren in a burdensome debt—once it had well

nigh passed out of their hands,—and the harassing anxiety of this embarrassment could not but have an unfavorable influence upon the culture of spiritual religion. There were also some trials in the church—cases of difficulty and discipline: yet, notwithstanding all these adverse influences there were tokens of good—souls were converted; and during the two years and three months of Mr. Ballard's ministry, he baptized eighteen persons into the church.

After Mr. Ballard, a Mr. Emmons supplied for a short time; he was succeeded by Elder Eveleth, a man after God's own heart:—but he was permitted to labor only a short period when he was called to his reward. "His memory," say the records of the church, "is embalmed in the affections of the good." Rev. Mr. Meriam now preached a few Sabbaths; after which the church enjoyed no more than occasional supplies until the settlement of Rev Mr. Hubbil Loomis, Aug. 1829, having been destitute of a pastor almost a year and a half. Mr. L. had been twenty-four years pastor of the Congregational church in Willington, Con., and had then recently been led, in consequence of a scriptural investigation, to renounce his former opinions concerning christian baptism, and embrace those which are held by our church. He remained with the church not quite a year, but was blessed in his labors, and baptized twenty-seven persons. He was immediately succeeded by Rev. Thomas Barrett, who was also eminently successful in winning souls to Christ. By him sixty-three persons were baptized into the church in the course of about two years and five months. Mr. Barrett was an eminently pious and useful man, highly esteemed by all who knew him, and is still remembered with a tender and hallowed affection. The manner of his death was

deeply distressing. Under the influence of strong nervous depression and disease, reason was driven from the throne, and he put a period to his own life, Aug. 7, 1832. The church which had been greatly strengthened and enlarged by his ministry, felt keenly the stroke; but seem to have sustained it with becoming fortitude and submission.

During the ministry of Mr. Barrett three brethren were chosen by the church as deacons. Brother George Waters was unanimously chosen July, 1830, to fill the place of deacon Stephen Bartlett, who died April, 1824. He served the church in this capacity but one year, when, feeling it to be his duty to preach the gospel, he resigned his office of deacon and entered upon a course of preparation for the ministry. He has now for several years been a highly esteemed and useful pastor. Deacon Waters and deacon Howland both resigned their office as deacon, June, 1831, and at the same meeting brethren Solomon Robinson and Prince Brackett were unanimously chosen to fill their place.

The large accessions to the church during the period of which we now speak show it to have been eminently a time of the right hand of the Most High. The changes were as follows: received by baptism, one hundred and fifteen; letter, thirty-three; dismissed to join other churches, forty-five; died, seven; excluded five; missing, thirteen. Whole number one hundred and forty-one. Net gain sixty-six members.

4. The next period extends from the death of the Rev. T. Barrett, to the settlement of Mr. Leonard. With the commencement of this period the church assumes the name of the Baptist Church in *Webster*; that portion of Dudley in which it was located, together with a part of Oxford, having

been incorporated as a separate town with this appellation: in honor of that distinguished statesman of this commonwealth whose name it bears. This period is mostly remarkable for the frequency of pastoral and ministerial changes, and the general depression and decline of spiritual religion. Though most of the time enjoying the labors of faithful ministers, the awakened and excited feeling of preceding years soon gave place to a corresponding apathy. Rev. Abiel Fisher visited the place and commenced ministerial labor not long after the death of the lamented Barrett, and continued for the space of about one year and a half. During his stay, the remaining part of the debt which had been contracted in building the meeting-house was finally discharged. The same year $200 were raised for the Worcester County High School. Mr. Fisher was succeeded by Elder Grow, who for the space of one year labored with much acceptance, especially to the more spiritual portion of the people. After him, the desk was supplied for the space of six months by Mr. Wm. R. Collier, a licentiate from Boston, when the church was again dependent upon occasional supplies; mostly from the Newton Theological Institute. In the meantime, however, Rev. Mr. Dean supplied a few months. During this period of four years and one month, the church records mention no less than seventeen preachers who successively supplied the pulpit. The following are the changes which occurred. Baptized three; received by letter, twenty-nine; dismissed, forty-seven; died, eight; excluded, one. Whole number one hundred and ten. Net decrease thirty-one.

5. This brings us to the period of Mr. Leonard's ministry. Here, a bare outline of *facts* is all that can well be expected of *us*. The duty of

faithful comment we leave to a more impartial hand. Mr. L. was ordained as pastor of the church Sept. 7, 1836. He found an interesting and encouraging field where others had labored, and he was invited to enter into their labors. There were abundant materials, which by faithfulness and grace might be wrought into the spiritual temple of God. Yet none could be insensible how much that grace was needed. There were some difficulties threatening the peace and harmony of the church, and in several respects we seemed to be in an unsettled state. Accordingly the early part of this period was attended with trials and changes. Yet he who walks in the midst of the golden candlesticks did not forsake us:—he granted us a little reviving the winter of 1836-7, and again the following winter 1837-8 his Spirit was poured out, and many in our midst were converted. As the result, thirty-six were baptized into the church, and a Congregational church formed in the place. From that time we think we have enjoyed a gradually increased prosperity. Our meetings have been well attended. God hath preserved to us peace in the church, and raised us up valued friends without, who have uniformly and liberally contributed to the support of the institutions of religion. In the winter of 1840-1, by the united co-operation of church and society, the interior of our house of worship was reconstructed. No sooner were the arrangements for this undertaking completed, and the care of it removed from our minds, than we were again visited by a season of refreshing from on high. It was a sweet and precious season, and its influence most happy on the church. As a result, twenty-eight were added to our number by being baptized, and the congregation very considerably increased. During both the winters

1841-2, and 1842-3, we enjoyed some revival. As the fruit of the revival of 1841-2, ten were baptized into the church. In Jan. 1839, brother Dyer Freeman was unanimously chosen to fill the place of deacon Brackett, who had removed to Sturbridge. Mr. Leonard continued his labors as pastor till April, 1843; when, with the kindest feelings existing between him and his people, he made known his convictions of duty to retire to another field, and was accordingly dismissed to the Baptist church in Thompson, Ct., whose invitation he had accepted to become their pastor. This period includes a term of six years and seven months, during which time the changes that occurred were as follows. Added by baptism, eighty-four; by letter, fifty-five; restored, three; dismissed to unite with other churches, sixty-nine; died, four; excluded, three; erased as being unknown, six. Present number one hundred and seventy-four. Net gain sixty-four members.

We close this sketch with one reflection. It relates to the great value of a faithful ministry to the prosperity of a church, which we think the past history of this church strikingly illustrates. More than eleven years out of the twenty-eight and a half years of its existence, it has been destitute of a pastor:—or, previously to the commencement of Mr. Leonard's ministry it had been destitute something more than one half of the time. The result of this destitution is soon told:—depression, discouragement and desolation. To substantiate this it is needful only to refer to that dark period between the resignation of the first pastor, Mr. Brown, and the settlement of Mr. Ballard; and also a considerable portion of that period between the death of Mr. Barrett and the ordination of Mr. Leonard. On the other hand,

every season of special and permanent prosperity will be found connected with the labors of a pastor. Thus is the church furnished with perpetual evidence that Christ is still in her midst, blessing his own institutions; and thus is she constantly urged by the strongest motives faithfully to maintain these institutions.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN WILBRAHAM AND MONSON, MASS.

In 1768, a Baptist church was constituted in the north eastern part of Wilbraham, now called the North village. Little, however, is known of its history, and that little is fast fading away. In 1770, Mr. Seth Clark was ordained their pastor. The church flourished for a number of years. In 1779, they built a meeting-house of sufficient dimensions to accommodate a large country congregation for those early times. From some unknown cause, however, this church at length declined. In 1802, when the Sturbridge Association held its first anniversary, they reported 228 members. The same number appears on the m nutes till 1807, when a committee appointed by the Association the year previous, reported that this church had lost its visibility.

During the existence of the above-mentioned church, July 2, 1794, about twenty-five of its members, residing in the south-east part of Wilbraham and the south-west part of Monson, united together, and received fellowship as the second Baptist church in Wilbraham. In 1815 its name was changed to that which it now bears—The Baptist church in Wilbraham and Monson. The churches represented at the recognition of this

church were those of Suffield, Conn. under the pastoral care of the Rev. J. Hastings, Enfield, Conn., under the pastoral care of Rev. C. Miner, and the church of which the recognised church was the offspring. Twelve delegates composed the council. In the year 1800 this church united with the Danbury (now Hartford) Association, and in 1805 it became connected with the newly formed Sturbridge Association.

It is difficult, from the imperfection of the records, to trace the history of this church during its early years. In its infancy it seems for some years to have done little more than maintain "in a limited degree," the public worship of God on the Sabbath, and that generally without preaching. In 1795 trials commenced, which but for the laborious services of one of God's servants, deacon Israel Bennett, whose name is mentioned with great respect, would most likely have resulted in the extinction of the church.

In October, 1799, the clouds which had overhung the church gave signs of passing away. Fourteen were found who were ready to renew their covenant. Measures were likewise taken to ascertain whether the feeble remnant were still in fellowship with sister churches, and an affirmative reply was received from the council to which the question was submitted in May, 1800. In the meantime accessions to their numbers were going on, so that at the close of the latter year their number must have been not far from fifty. After this season of refreshing nothing special in their history occurred till 1807, when a revival was granted them, and about thirty were added to their number. On uniting with the Sturbridge Association this year they reported seventy-two members, and in 1808 they reported one hundred and seven members.

Soon after the revival just named, by which the prospects of the church had been brightened, difficulties of a new character found place among them, and in 1809 it was thought necessary to call a mutual council from sister churches. The advice of this council resulted in lasting benefit, by occasioning unanimity of sentiment with regard to discipline. Accessions continued to be made from year to year in small numbers till 1815, when as the fruits of a special revival thirty-three were added by baptism, and the following year nine.

In 1817, individuals of the church and others disposed to engage in the enterprise, erected a commodious house of worship, at an expense of about two thousand dollars, in the western part of Monson, on the road leading from Monson to South Wilbraham, nearly equi-distant from both, and favorably situated for gathering the scattered inhabitants of the borders of these towns. Previously to this, the church and congregation had met in private dwellings, and on entering their new house of worship, it was very natural that their pastor, the Rev. Alvin Bennett, should take for the text of the dedication sermon, "*I was glad when they said unto me, let us go into the house of the Lord.*" From this time for many years the church pursued the even tenor of its way, with little to make its history remarkable except that in 1822 a difficulty both singular and subtle, an ingenious device of the adversary, manifested itself, and for a while threatened to separate very friends. By mutual kindness and forbearance, however, the evil was averted, and by a very unanimous discipline, the guilty occasion of the difficulty was removed. From 1817 till the resignation of Mr. Bennett in Jan. 1836, one hundred and seventeen were added by baptism. The whole number of

members returned to the Association this year was one hundred and fifty-two. The later years of the history of this church have been marked with many trials. The number of members has been gradually diminishing by death, by dismissions, and by exclusions. Since 1836, twenty-two have been added by baptism.

Ministers. At the time of the constitution of this church, the Rev. Samuel Webster was their pastor. He continued in the office but a short time. He removed, first to Monson, then to Vermont, where he is supposed to have died.

In 1799, the Rev. Stephen Shepherd became the pastor of the church, and labored with them about half the time for nearly ten years. His labors are very favorably mentioned. He removed to West Springfield, where he died Nov. 4, 1835, in the eighty-fifth year of his age.

In 1808 the Rev. Alvin Bennett, then a licentiate, commenced preaching with this people a part of the time, and in the spring of the following year, he took up his residence among them, where he has ever since resided. On the 31st of January, 1810, he was by request of the church, ordained at Hampton, Conn., of the Baptist church in which place, he was, till after that time, a member. Being thus inducted into the ministry, he entered at once upon his pastoral duties, and though he was sometimes absent a part of the time by consent of the church, he continued to be their pastor till Jan. 31, 1836, a period of exactly twenty-six years. He then voluntarily resigned his pastoral charge. From the period of his ordination to his resignation, he preached 4505 sermons, and attended as the officiating clergyman, 524 funerals.

After the Rev. Mr. Bennett closed his labors, the church was mostly supplied by licentiates of their own number till April, 1837, when Rev.

Amos Snell became their pastor. He had for some time preached for them once a month. He now preached three-fourths of the time. He continued with them till 1840.

Deacons. These have been Israel Bennett, Nathan Pease, Eriel Day, and Nathaniel Pease.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN MONSON.

This church was gathered by Rev. A. Snell in the year 1834. He had preached in this town frequently during the fall of 1833, and the winter of 1833–34, during which time there had been a gracious revival. In the spring of the latter year he took up his residence among the scattered Baptists of the region in which this church is located, at their invitation, and became their regular preacher. In the month of June a Baptist Society was organized, and in October of the same year, twenty-nine baptized believers, nine males and twenty females, formed themselves into a church. Of this number eleven had been recently baptized. On the 19th of Nov. following, this body was publicly recognised, by a council composed of delegates from the following churches, viz: Wilbraham and Monson, Wales, Holland, and the first, second and third churches in Ashford, Conn. The ministers who took part in the services were, Rev. Messrs. A. Bennett, A. Babcock, T. Wakefield, and W. Munger. In December the Rev. Mr. Snell was chosen pastor, and brother Samuel Nichols, deacon. In Aug. 1835, this church was received into the Sturbridge Association.

Rev. Mr. Snell continued his pastoral labors till the spring of 1837, when brother A. E. Green,

then a licentiate, became their religious teacher. He remained with them two years, when he was succeeded by Rev. Dexter Munger, who in 1841 was succeeded by Rev. A. Babcock. He was engaged for one half of the time for one year.

This church has never had a house of worship. It has met in school houses. Its members are generally poor. It has seen some dark seasons, occasioned by the necessity of discipline, but has generally maintained the unity of the spirit. It has maintained a Sabbath school during a portion of the period of its history, notwithstanding the disadvantages under which it has labored. A part of this period they have had preaching but one half of the time.

Their prospects have never been bright—they are now gloomy. Rev. Alvin Bennett, who for some years has labored among the destitute, dispenses the word of life here a part of the time, and seeks to sustain the fainting hearts of this little flock. May the little one become a thousand.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN BELCHERTOWN.

This church was constituted June 24, 1795, by a council from the churches in Wilbraham and Shutesbury, Mass. and Suffield, Conn., and consisted originally of sixteen members, nine males and seven females. The Rev. Samuel Bigelow, one of the original members, was, as is supposed, a principal instrument in gathering the church, and labored with them more or less for some time. He died in this vicinity in 1807. Soon after the organization of the church it was voted to unite with the Warren Association, and the pastor was appointed a messenger to make the application.

When, however, the Sturbridge Association was formed, the connexion of this church with the Warren Association ceased. In 1806 serious difficulties arose which threatened the annihilation of the church. A council was called in 1808 for their adjustment, and by the Divine blessing was successful in its endeavors. A revival succeeded in which from seventy to eighty were received to the church by baptism. June 10, 1810, the Rev. David Pease was ordained their pastor, (the Rev. Dr. Baldwin of Boston, preaching,) he remained with them several years. His ministry is mentioned in terms of commendation. At this time the church labored under great embarrassment both for the reason that its members were spread over a large territory, and because they had no suitable place of worship. The attempt to remove this latter difficulty, after great exertions, was finally successful. A meeting house, commenced in May, 1812, was finished and dedicated March 14, 1814, the Rev. Elisha Andrews preaching on the occasion from Psalms 80 : 1. Rev. Mr. Pease closed his successful ministry in the spring of 1818, and was immediately succeeded by Rev. Thomas Marshall, who was installed Sept. 23, of the same year. The Rev. Elijah Montague preached on the occasion. The Rev. Cyrus P. Grosvener visited this church in the fall of 1823, before Mr. Marshall had left town, and labored with them three or four months.

The Rev. Stephen S. Nelson commenced preaching with this church in 1825, and continued his labors for about a year and a half. They were then dependent on occasional supplies until the summer of 1828, when the Rev. Henry Archibald commenced preaching, and continued with them till the spring of 1830. The Rev. Tubal Wakefield succeeded Mr. Archibald at this time,

and continued his labors for four years. For the succeeding two years, the pulpit was supplied by Rev. Messrs. John Holbrook, Benjamin Putnam, Moses Curtis, Thomas Rand, Alvin Bennett, and others. In the spring of 1836 the Rev. Calvin Monroe commenced preaching with this people, and was succeeded in 1837 by the Rev. Chester Tilden, who in 1842 was succeeded by Rev. Moses Curtis, whose valuable labors this church now enjoys.

In 1834, in consequence of difficulties growing out of the Anti-Masonic excitement, a new Congregational church, called the Brainerd church, was organized in this town, and a beautiful house of worship was built for their use. In 1842 these difficulties were so far adjusted that a re-union of the Congregational churches took place, and the new edifice was left vacant. It was bought soon after by the Baptists, who now occupy it. It was built at an expense of about five thousand dollars, and an edifice of that cost will rarely be found which combines so many beauties of architecture and satisfies so well a cultivated taste.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN THREE RIVERS, MASS.

Formerly called the Belchertown and Palmer Church.

This church, originally consisting of twenty-four members, eleven males and thirteen females, was constituted Nov. 16, 1825, by a council, at which the Rev. Messrs Alvin Bennett, Stephen S. Nelson, and Thomas Rand were present, with several lay brethren. The meeting was held at the Methodist meeting-house in Belchertown, at which place this church was accustomed to meet, being supplied with preaching at this time by the Rev. Al-

vin Bennett one fourth of the time. The sermon at the constituting of the church was preached by the Rev. T. Rand from Phil. 2 : 1, 2. In the winter of 1826–27, a revival was enjoyed in which seven were added to the church by baptism, and in the fall of the latter year, the Rev. Henry Archibald of Shrewsbury, was united to the pastoral office of this church, and became at the same time pastor of the Baptist church in Belchertown. In the spring of 1830, Mr. Archibald was succeeded by the Rev. T. Wakefield, of Lyme, Conn., in the pastorate of these churches. Mr. W. remained with them during two years. In the spring of 1832 the present meeting-house at Three Rivers was commenced, and on the 11th of Sept. 1833, it was dedicated to the worship of God, the Rev. A. Parker of Sturbridge, preaching on the occasion. During the building of this house, the church was supplied for a considerable time gratuitously by neighboring ministers, in order that the resources of this then small parish might be applied to the rising sanctuary. In the spring of 1833, the Rev. David Pease was employed for one year. At the close of this period, Mr. J. R. Bigelow commenced his labors as a candidate for settlement, and at the session of the Association in August following, was ordained. Very soon after this, a revival commenced, during the continuance of which the number of church members was more than doubled, and the strength of the church increased in the same proportion. The Rev. Mr. Bigelow continued his labors until the spring of 1839.— During his ministry seventy-four were added by baptism. In the spring of 1839, the Rev. Prosper Powell was chosen pastor of the church, and continued his labors for two years, when he was succeeded by Rev. N. B. Jones. Mr. Jones was succeeded by Rev. Chester Tilden, and the Rev.

Joseph Hodges is now pastor of this church. During the years of these frequent pastoral changes there have been several revivals, and a large number have been added by baptism. But it has been a period of many trials likewise. These, however, alike necessary in this imperfect state to churches and individuals, it is hoped will result ultimately in the welfare of this body of Christ, and become the means of rendering the spiritual efficiency of this church in some degree proportionate to the signal favors with which she has been blessed.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN HOLLAND, MASS.

In the winter of 1816–17, it pleased God to visit this place with a revival of religion, and in this happy event originated a Baptist society which was organised in the month of May following. About this time, two members of the Congregational church having embraced Baptist sentiments, viz: dea. Samuel Webber and sister Lydia Glazier, were baptized, and on the 25th of June, 1817, these persons with others, twenty in all, were recognised as a Baptist church by an ecclesiastical council. Rev. Parson Covely of Thompson, Conn., preached on the occasion, and the Rev. Zenas L. Leonard gave the right hand of fellowship. Honorable mention is made of the labors of the Rev. Messrs. Leonard, Angell and Niles in the work of planting this church.

Rev. John Payne was the first minister of this church. He has been succeeded by Rev. Ephraim Sawyer, Rev. Tubal Wakefield, Rev. John M. Hunt, Rev. Linas Austin, Rev. Washington Munger, and Rev. Joseph Glazier. (1840.) Rev. Mr. Munger was ordained pastor in 1832. Rev

Mr. Glazier was ordained in this place as an evangelist in 1823.

For three years, the Baptist society had no meeting-house. Though regarding themselves as entitled to the use of a house of worship already built, as part owners, they were obliged to meet in a private house or barn till Aug. 25, 1820, when a new house which they had erected was dedicated, the Rev. Mr. Leonard of Sturbridge preaching. The society has likewise a convenient parsonage.

BAPTIST CHURCH IN LONG-MEADOW, MASS.

The Baptist church in East Long-Meadow owes its existence, under God, to the labors of Rev. George Atwell of Enfield, Conn. On the 30th of December, 1806, he was called to attend a funeral in that vicinity. The occasion was marked with great solemnity, and was followed by a glorious revival of religion. During the spring and summer following, a deep religious interest pervaded the whole community. People who had seldom attended divine worship before, now came together by multitudes to hear the Word. On the 7th of June, 1807, he baptized nine persons, and on the 5th of July following, nine more. These, together with five others who had previously been baptized, were then constituted a branch of the Baptist church in Enfield, and the ordinance of communion was administered for the first time. They remained as a branch of the Enfield church about eleven years. Bro. Atwell continued to preach a portion of the time to the branch thus constituted, until April, 1814, when he exchanged the labors of earth for the glories of heaven. Bro. Alvin Bennett also preached three fourths of the time during the year

1808. After the death of Bro. Atwell, he also supplied the pulpit occasionally a number of years, and statedly a part of the time during the years 1817–18. Rev. Buckley Waters, who succeeded Bro. Atwell, also preached at Long-Meadow occasionally during this time. It was at the suggestion of Bro. Bennett that a council assembled on the 23d of June, 1818, by request of the Long-Meadow branch of the Baptist church in Enfield to consider the expediency of framing that branch into a separate church. The council complied with the request, and Rev. Asahel Morse of Suffield, and Rev. Eli Ball conducted the religious services of the occasion. Rev. Henry Archibald, and Rev. Thomas Barrett being sent by the state convention, then preached for the church, a while after this, and previous to April, 1820. From that time Rev. Ephraim Sawyer supplied the pulpit for one year, during which time many were added to the church. The year following the church enjoyed the preaching of Bro. George D. Atwell, son of Rev. George Atwell, who was first instrumental in establishing the church. On the 11th of Sept. 1822, Bro. Atwell was ordained to the work of preaching the gospel, and thereby became pastor of the church. The sermon was preached by Rev. Asahel Morse, of Suffield. Bro. Atwell remained with the church until 1825. After his departure, the church had preaching but seldom, for several years, with the exception of Bro. Gage of Stafford, who preached statedly for five or six months. In 1831, Rev. Nicholas Branch of Springfield, supplied the church one half of the time. This year the church enjoyed a season of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and several were baptized. In 1832 a neat and commodious meeting-house was constructed by the church and society, and consecrated to the worship of God.

The dedicatory sermon was preached by Rev. Alvin Bennett of Wilbraham, who then preached for the church a portion of the time. Rev. Henry Tonkin supplied the church during the year 1833. In 1834 they enjoyed the labors of Rev. Isaac Dwinnel. This year the church enjoyed a glorious revival in which many were brought to the knowledge of the truth. Bro. Dwinnel was assisted by the Rev. John McDonald, of West Springfield, who bore a conspicuous part in this work of grace, and there are still many members of the church in whose hearts his memory will be long and fondly cherished. In 1835, Rev. John M. Hunt, formerly of Mansfield, Conn., was called to fill the pastoral office in the church, which place he retained until 1840. After Bro. Hunt's departure, the pulpit was supplied for several Sabbaths by Rev. John R. Bigelow, of Palmer, and occasionally by Rev. Alvin Bennett of Wilbraham, who afterwards preached during the year ending the first of April, 1842.

About this time the society contracted with Bro. Moses J. Kelley, of Newton Theological Institution, to supply the pulpit the ensuing year. In the spring and summer of 1842, the Lord poured out his Spirit, and many were converted, a good number of whom were baptized by Rev. J. G. Warren, of Cabotville, and Rev. J. F. Burbank, of Newton, the latter of whom preached for the church several months during this season. On Wednesday, Sept. 14th, 1842, in compliance with a call from the church and the decision of a council then convened, Bro. Moses J. Kelly was set apart to the work of the gospel ministry. Rev. S. B. Swaim, of Worcester, preached the sermon and made the ordaining prayer. The church now (1842) numbers one hundred and twenty-three members.

C 8035.9.5
History of the Baptist churches com
Widener Library 003668137
3 2044 081 804 890